

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
REGULATORY COMMISSION OF ALASKA

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November 8, 2002

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
Portals II, TW-A325
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

Re: CC Docket 96-45
Ex-Parte Recommendation on Including Voice Mail as a Supported Service from
State Joint Board Members

Dear Chairman Powell:

The State Members of the Federal-State Universal Service Joint Board (Joint Board) appreciate the opportunity to offer our recommendation to the FCC on whether voice mail should be eligible for support under the Schools and Libraries program. During one of the Universal Service Joint Board calls the federal staff asked that we file an ex parte letter with you if we wished to express an opinion on this issue. We met separately, reviewed some cost data and relevant comments in the record and unanimously agree that voice mail should be supported.

The record shows that the administrative costs to both the applicant schools and libraries and USAC of excluding support for voice mail exceed the support that would go to this service. Voice mail is part of a package of services that schools purchase and ascertaining the separate costs is difficult.

Voice mail is also a comparable means of communication to e-mail for many families that do not have computers. Communications between the schools and families is a vital part of the educational process.

We investigated our concern that funding for voice mail might impair funding for Priority Two projects by substantially increasing the amount of Priority One requests. Based on information from USAC, we concluded that funding voice mail would have a nominal impact on increases in Priority One requests. If this should change in the future, the FCC has the ability to institute appropriate limits on voice mail funding to alleviate such concerns.

Finally, it would not be cost-effective to audit exclusion of voice mail because of the manner in which that service is billed. In order to be even-handed and have **an** internally consistent program, voice mail should be funded.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this **issue**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Nanette Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

G. Nanette Thompson
State Chair, Universal Service Joint Board

GNT/jmg

CC: Marlene H. Dortch